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La gloria della famiglia Salviati

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SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Introduction

Most of us have heard of the Medici family and when we visit Florence, they seem to be ubiquitous. Yet during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, many other patrician families, just as rich and influential, helped to shape the city and its surroundings. For a long time, scholars persisted in the idea that these patrician families lost all their political power after the installation of Cosimo I de' Medici, and could therefore only be seen as sycophant courtiers without any leverage. This began to change after the 1970s with the work of Berner (1971, 1972), Diaz (1980), Litchfield (1986), Bizzocchi (2003) and Boutier (2004, 2008) (p.16). This dissertation sheds light on one of those families: the Salviati. This family also began to receive more scholarly attention, especially in the publications of Pierre Hurtubise, Miletta Sbrilli, Ewa Karwacka Codini, and more recently Sally Cornelison (p.17). This dissertation builds on this body of work, but specifically deals with the art patronage of five generations of Salviati during the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century. How their patronage relates to the political, socio-economical, religious and artistic developments in Florence will be discussed. A careful analysis of the cultural commissions of the Salviati family will show the complexity of their relationship with the ruling Medici family. Moreover, a thorough interpretation of the art works will shed light on how individuals from the same family represented themselves in different ways (p.23-24).

Chapter 2: The villa Salviati near Ponte alla Badia – Jacopo Salviati (1461-1533)

In 1478, members of the Salviati family were involved in the Pazzi-conspiracy against the Medici. This had a negative effect on the relationship between the two families. (p.31). Around the same time, the influence of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola grew steadily. His ideas initially received support from most of the Florentine elite, but this enthusiasm was short lived. Around 1498 opinions had radically shifted and Savonarola was publicly burned to death on Piazza della Signoria. Jacopo Salviati, however, had supported the friar till the end, while on the other hand, his marriage to Lucrezia de' Medici had strengthened his ties to the Medici (p.33). Scholars have often overlooked the complexity of Jacopo's political alliances. He has been placed either among the loyal supporters of the Medici, or characterised as a fanatic *piagnoni* and anti-Medici (p.36). Yet, Jacopo managed to stay on good terms with the Medici while simultaneously ventilating his preferences for a republican government and proclaiming his profound interest in Savonarola. He was never the instigator of revolt or rebellion, and was able to remain influential during republican times as well as under Medici rule. In the decoration of his villa near Ponte alla Badia, he found a way to visually express his political stance and his position regarding the Medici (p.40). The villa's private chapel was built and decorated in the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Portraits of saints representing Jacopo, his wife Lucrezia and their children adorned the ceiling of this small space. The walls were covered with the *imprese* of the Salviati and Medici family in sgraffito painting (pp.42-45). Texts from the bible were added underneath, reminding the beholder not to slander or bad-mouth others, and to always speak the truth (pp.49-50). The decorations in the chapel accorded with Jacopo's interest in Savonarola; the Dominican friar often preached against lying, slander and gossip. At the same time, they could be seen as a safeguard for Jacopo's behaviour. The Medici had just returned to Florence, and Jacopo had not supported this decision. He stresses family ties by painting the chapel walls with the Salviati and Medici *imprese*, therefore it was less problematic for him to oppose some of the Medici's political ideas (pp.49-52). The chapel in the villa can be compared to the *Capella dei Papi* in the church of Santa Maria Novella and the *Cappella dei Priori* in Palazzo Vecchio, where similar texts were used (pp.52-53). In the courtyard of the villa, we also find the *imprese* of the Salviati and Medici painted in sgraffito. The decorations were paired with sixteen *tondi* in terracotta. Jacopo had commissioned the sculptor Giovanfrancesco Rustici to design these reliefs. The *tondi* were modelled after antique and contemporary gems and cameos, some of them well known (pp.54-58). The courtyard resembles the *cortile* in Palazzo Medici, which was a deliberate choice. Again, Jacopo sought to counterbalance his support of the *piagnoni* and the political conflict with Lorenzo II de' Medici by

displaying his relationship with the Medici family. By creating the visual connection between the two houses, Jacopo could not only consolidate his relationship with the ruling family, but maybe even pretend to be of equal stature (pp.58-60).

Chapter 3: Palazzi in Rome and Florence – Giovanni (1490-1553), Bernardo (1508-1568), and Alamanno Salviati (1510-1571)

The next generation of Salviati had to deal with a new political landscape. In 1532 Alessandro de' Medici had been named duke of Florence, and five years later Cosimo de' Medici was officially chosen as *capo e primario del governo della città e del dominio*. Alamanno supported the appointment of Cosimo, while his brothers Giovanni and Bernardo were not particularly pleased to see a Medici in charge. Despite their growing political differences, the relationship between the brothers was never jeopardised. As leaders of the *fuorusciti* in Rome, Giovanni and Bernardo were very vocal in their disapproval of the new *capo*, especially after they lost the battle against Cosimo's troops at Montemurlo. The situation was reflected in some of their art commissions (pp.79-82). In 1517 Giovanni had been made cardinal by pope Leo X and moved to Rome, where he resided in the old palazzo of the Delle Rovere family. In 1533 he commissioned Francesco de' Rossi to paint the new private chapel with fresco's depicting the life of Saint John the Baptist (pp.82-84). Some twenty years later, in 1552 he asked the same artist, who had now adopted the last name of his patron, to decorate three other rooms on the second floor. In the largest space we find Apollo and Diana painted on the ceiling surrounded by four framed landscapes with the personal *impresa* of cardinal Giovanni. This *impresa* was composed of a tree trunk with new branches sprouting and the motto 'ΑΕΙΘΑΑΕΣ' (evergreen) (pp.84-85). The choice for a Greek motto was not unique, but in this case it is noteworthy. A few years earlier, Giovanni's still used the Latin motto 'Semper', which was strongly associated with the Medici (p.86). After the battle at Montemurlo, when his rivalry with Cosimo I came to head, he did not wish to display such an obvious Medici-connection any longer and decided to translate his motto into Greek (p.87). Bernardo Salviati's relationship with the Medici family seemed to have been less complicated, but also less visible (p.90). As previously mentioned, Alamanno Salviati had supported Cosimo I de' Medici from the beginning, and his dedication to the new Medici ruler was visible, most conspicuously, in the display of the Medici coat of arms on the outside of his new palazzo in Florence (p.92). Other commissions by Alamanno included several tapestries made in Cosimo de' Medici's new workshop and a *Venus with Cupid and a satyr* by Agnolo Bronzino. The Venus was to match three other painting he owned: a copy by Michele di Ridolfo Ghirlandaio of Michelangelo and Pontormo's *Venus en Cupido*, and two painted version of Michelangelo's Night and

Dawn, also by Ghirlandaio. The choices Alamanno made for his collection matched the artistic culture around the new Medici court. Alamanno, on the other hand, was also able to introduce new young artists like Francesco Salviati to the court (pp.95-96).

Chapter 4: Palazzo Salviati in the via del Corso – Jacopo Salviati (1537-1586)

After Alamanno's death in 1571, his son Jacopo inherited the palazzo in the via del Corso. He renovated the house between 1572 and 1582. Added to the existing building was a new apartment, consisting of several small rooms, a courtyard, a grotto, a garden and a private chapel. To fill these new spaces, Jacopo asked his agent Lorenzo Bonciani to bring back a large number of antique sculptures from Rome. Alessandro Allori and his workshop were commissioned to decorate the walls and ceilings. In the first room they painted the labours of Hercules with a strong emphasis on nature and love scenes (p.120-123). The *cortile* resembled Vitruvius' description of the classical Greek peristyle with sixteen scenes from the *Odyssey* painted underneath the galleries (pp.124-130). Depictions of the adventures of Odysseus became increasingly popular during the sixteenth century (pp.135-138). Other well know fresco cycles are in the *Galerie d'Ulysse* in Fontainebleau, commissioned by Francis I of France, in Palazzo Poggi in Bologna and Palazzo Grimaldi in Genua, and in the *Sala di Penelope* in Palazzo Vecchio (pp.138-140). In one of the smaller rooms of Jacopo's new apartment the *Batrachomyomachia* - the battle between mice and frogs - was depicted. Still believed to be written by Homer, this story was often published together with the *Odyssee*. The tale was also recited as a *scherzo* in the literary academies and *compagnie* of Florence. Andrea del Sarto's translation and reworking of the poem is an example of this (pp.132-135). From the courtyard, one was led through a walled garden to end up in the private chapel. The walls of this small space were covered with scenes from the life of Maria Magdalene (pp.140-144). Because of the connection between rooms, Jacopo's new apartment functioned as a performative space where the beholder was led to the most inner, and sacred, part of the palazzo (p.145). During this experience the beholder was overwhelmed by the patron's enthusiasm for antiquity and nature. Jacopo's love for nature was also expressed in a second garden, located behind the church of SS. Annunziata (pp.147-150). Unlike some other patricians, Jacopo did not feel the need to display his family history or show his loyalty to the Medici grand dukes. The apartment was an intimate and personal space that enabled him demonstrate his wealth, intellect, and personal interests.

Chapter 5: Religious interests depicted – Filippo (1515-1572), Averardo (1542-1595), and Antonio Salviati (1554-1619)

In late sixteenth-century Prato, a cult around Girolamo Savonarola led by prioress Caterina de' Ricci was steadily growing. Filippo Salviati became one of its most loyal supporters. He wrote her often and they exchanged gifts that included books by Savonarola and a portrait of the friar painted by Fra Bartolomeo (pp. 176-181). His devotion also led him to spend a fortune on a new church in Prato. He continued his religious patronage in Florence. In his will, he made clear that his two sons, Averardo and Antonio, had to finance one of the most expensive chapels in late sixteenth-century Florence: the chapel of Saint Antoninus in the San Marco Church. It was going to be the new resting place of Saint Antonio Pierozzi, who had been buried in 1459 behind the altar of the same church (pp.181-183). Averardo and Antonio commissioned Giambologna, court artist of the Medici, to design the chapel and the sculptures, and Alessandro Allori was appointed to oversee the fresco decorations. On top of that, three large altarpieces were commissioned from the painter Allori, Francesco Morandini and Giovanni Battista Naldini. The art works in the chapel not only told the story of the saint, but also represented the Salviati family and the concept of 'salvation' (pp.193-196). In the vestibule, Domenico Passignano painted two large frescoes commemorating the translation of the body of Saint Antoninus (pp.203-208). The Medici family, particularly archbishop Alessandro de' Medici, had been meddling in the building process. The chapel's ambitious and prestigious plan, and the fact that it was the new resting place for a Florentine saint, suited the cultural and religious politics of the Medici. It was, therefore, no surprise that the archbishop and Grand Duke Ferdinando I wanted to be involved in this extravagant project (pp.208-210). The grand duke appropriated the religious festivities for himself. By incorporating the translation of the body of the saint in his wedding celebrations, he utilised the magnificence of the chapel for his self-representation. At the same time, because the wedding brought high-ranking clerics and rulers from neighbouring areas to the church of San Marco, the Salviati brothers, whose names and emblems were clearly visible in the chapel decorations, could receive most of the praise and recognition for this project. Thus, the chapel and the festivities served the interests of the various participants; the Salviati and the Medici used each other to glorify their own families.

Chapter 6: The Salviati in the seventeenth century – Jacopo Salviati (1607-1672).

During the financial crisis in the beginning of the seventeenth century, Florentine patricians became more interested in acquiring land and noble titles (pp.233-235). This included Duke Jacopo Salviati. In 1628 he married Veronica Cibo from Massa. For the

occasion of their wedding, Jacopo commissioned Andrea Salvadori and Francesco Furini to create two celebratory works (pp.235-236). Salvadori's poem and Furini's painting both focused on Maria and Francesca Salviati. These women had brought forth the future rulers of Tuscany and the Papal State, namely Cosimo I de' Medici and Pope Leo XI (Alessandro de' Medici). With these commissions, Jacopo had created the visual and textual proof of the importance of his family, and the essential role they played in history. By choosing the image of a Salviati-mother and depicting the Medici rulers as children, the Salviati appear to be even more significant than the Medici. Through these works of art, Jacopo tried to elevate his position in seventeenth-century Florentine society (pp.238-246). To further improve his standing, Jacopo started to write poetry and perform in theatrical and musical pieces (pp.257-259). A series of sonnets, published under the title *De Fiori dell' Orto di Gessemani e del Calvario Sonetti del Duca Salviati*, was one of his main accomplishments. The frontispiece, designed by Baldassare Franceschini, features Urania as the muse of Christian poetry and reflects Jacopo's acquaintance with contemporary ideas circulating in the Florentine *compagnie* (pp.260-267).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

It has become clear that many of the art works commissioned by five generations Salviati reflected and signalled the political, economical, and social developments in Florence during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Furthermore, these commissions expressed, directly or indirectly, the relationship of the Salviati with the Medici family. In almost all cases, the Salviati strove to present themselves as the Medici's equals, even while they became more and more dependent on the Medici court.

